U.S. Denies It Wants Cuba Trader Boycott

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The State Department said yesterday it "does not favor" any boycott by American consumers against products from countries which trade with Cuba.

Only a brief comment, with no elaboration, marked the first direct Johnson Administration policy statement on an issue which has come into prominence since Britain and a number of other countries have made clean their intention to trade with Cuba against U.S. wishes.

It appeared to be a pullback from what had been widely regarded as Administration hints that American consumer boycotts of British products might be looked on with sympathy.

The statement was read to reporters by Department Press Officer Richard I. Phillips in reply to a news conference question on what the Government's attitude was toward boycotts connected with Cuban trade.

Rusk Statement

Secretary of State Dean Rusk in a Feb. 15 interview with the Voice of America, broadcast around the world, was asked about the matter of boycotts and replied:

"Well, we don't ourselves plan to organize any boycott against the goods of countries that may be engaged in that (Cuban) trade. I think it is possible there may be some consumer reaction here in this country, here and there with respect to firms that specifically engage in that trade. But that's something that is in the hands of private citizens; we have no part in that ourselves."

[In one reaction to the question of boycott, the Bourbon Institute in a press release called on military service clubs to "emphasize American products in their purchases." The group's president, retired Vice Adm. W. J. Marshall referred to Rusk as having stated that American citizens may begin an unofficial boycott of British goods because of sale of British buses to Cuba.]

Meanwhile, two countries threatened with loss of American aid because of shipping to Cuba have told Washington they are willing to cooperate but need time to figure out how.

Sugar Imported

In numbers of vessels the two nations—Spain and Morocco—are among the smallest free world shippers to Cuba, yet they are having the greatest difficulty keeping on the good side of the United States.

Morocco is in trouble under the U.S. foreign aid law not because it has any policy to help Fidel Castro but because it drinks a great deal of tea—tea with lots of sugar. Morocco has long-term contracts to buy sugar from Cuba, and it has two or three ships which make runs to satisfy its national addiction.

Last December Congress amended the foreign aid law to cut off funds to countries which failed by Feb. 14, 1964, to take "appropriate steps" to halt trade with Cuba.

The Johnson Administration, under pressure from Republicans to "do something" about Cuba, this week told Morocco it would get no new aid commitments until "appropriate steps" were taken against shipping.

Spain, which also likes sugar, has more far-reaching reasons for sending ships to Cuba.

Cuba was once a Spanish colony. Many Spanish citizens still live there. Many of these are in Castro jails, and the Spanish government is trying to get them out. Cuba confiscated much Spanish property and Spain is seeking repayment. Many people in Spain have relatives living in Cuba.

Because of these ties, Spain has decided its wisest course is to maintain trade and other relations with Cuba.

The U.S. and Spanish governments are negotiating to find some compromise which then will be taken to U.S. congressional committees for their approval.

[Reuters reported from Madrid that a Spanish state-sponsored firm confirmed yesterday it sold 150 12-ton trucks to Cuba. It said 18 Pegaso motor trucks were shipped to Cuba last week and the rest were expected to be dispatched within a month.]